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ABSTRACT

A brief review is presented of the structural differences between play, games, and sport activities and the subjective experiences of young participants. Three contexts were examined--spontaneous play, informal games, and organized team sports. Findings suggested that patterns of experiences varied according to the context in which they occurred. The motives for participation, the dynamics of the activities, the meanings assigned to experiences, and the implications of the subjective experiences were different for each of the settings. The experience in spontaneous play and informal games emphasized interpersonal skills, creativity, cooperation, negotiation, and compromise. Organized sports, on the other hand, emphasized a knowledge and dependence on strict rules and the acceptance of the decisions of others in positions of legitimate authority. The implications for social development in each of these kinds of activity are discussed. (JD)

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PLAY, GAMES AND SPORT

Developmental Implications for Young People

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PLAY, GAMES, AND SPORT: DEVELOPMENTAL IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. Jay J. Coakley, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

The participation of youngsters in organized sport programs has increased dramatically over the past two decades. Until recently, few people questioned this trend; it has usually been assumed that participation in sport is wholesome and conducive to normal child development. But during the past few years organized sports have come under attack. Critics accuse them of being overly competitive, work-oriented, funless programs leading participants to become anxiety-ridden failures or cynical sport specialists. Proponents of the programs have responded with equally extreme statements about the positive consequences of participation. This paper is an attempt to move beyond the rhetoric about youth sports. An understanding of what happens to kids during their participation in different types of sport activities requires an awareness of (1) the characteristics of the social contexts in which the activities occur and (2) the meanings that the kids themselves assign to their experiences. The paper presents a brief review of the structural differences between play, games, and sport and reports data collected on the subjective experiences of young participants (less than 13 years old) in each of these activity contexts. Data were gathered through a combination of semi-structured interviews and observations of participants in organized youth sport programs (football, soccer, baseball, and softball), informally organized games (variety of types), and spontaneous play activities. The findings clearly suggest that the patterns of experiences vary according to the context in which they occur. The motives for participation, the dynamics of the activities, the meanings assigned to experiences, and the implications of the subjective experiences are different for each of the settings. It is concluded that spontaneous play is an emergent, expressive, and structurally unstable activity sustained through role playing, interpersonal exchange processes, and immediate positive reinforcement. Games are activities dependent on abilities to manage competitive interpersonal relationships and they provide experiences with a combined emphasis on expression, personal involvement, and controlled uncertainty. Organized sport is a structurally stable activity providing experiences focusing on role learning, performance, and outcomes. Each activity offers a unique and necessary, but incomplete, set of developmental experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

The participation of youngsters in organized sport programs has increased dramatically over the past two decades. Until recently, few people questioned this trend; it has usually been assumed that participation in sport is wholesome and conducive to normal child development (especially for males). But during the past few years, organized sports have come under attack. The critics accuse them of being overly competitive, work-oriented, funless programs leading participants to become anxiety-ridden failures or cynical sport specialists. The proponents of the programs have responded with equally extreme statements about the positive consequences of participation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This paper is an attempt to provide information for those interested in starting to untangle the complex developmental implications of a young person's involvement in various types of physical activities. In searching for an answer for those who frequently ask if parents should encourage their sons and daughters to become involved in organized sports, my students and I observed and talked to hundreds of youngsters (under 14 years old) about their own experiences in physical activities.[1] However, we did not limit our attention to the participants in organized programs. We tried to make observations and conduct informal interviews in a variety of settings in which physical activity and movement were prevalent.

Our major concern was to discover if the types of experiences, and the meanings that children themselves assigned to those experiences varied with the characteristics of the contexts in which they emerged. After a few attempts to make observations and talk to children involved in physical activities, it was discovered that there were numerous varieties of participation contexts and that it would be impossible to look at samples of each of them. For example, participation in an organized team sport program may occur in regular scheduled games, practice games, tournament games, all-star games, scrimmage games, practices with the coach present, practices without the coach, practices in which drills are run, and those in which sides are selected and competitive games played, and so on. Additionally, there was a similar variety of participation

settings for those involved in organized individual sport programs such as tennis, track and field, figure skating, gymnastics, etc. Variations were also noted in other activity settings unrelated to organized sport programs.

Our solution was to limit our initial investigation to a few well-defined, distinguishable physical activity settings. Since most of the literature on this general topic ultimately distinguishes between play, games and sport, we decided to focus on three specific contexts:

1. Spontaneous play (i.e., participant initiated vigorous and/or complex physical activities in which action is not governed by pre-established rules).

2. Informal games (i.e., participant controlled, competitive physical activities governed at least partially by pre-established rules related to expectations for collective and individual behavior).

3. Organized team sport events (i.e., regular season, scheduled games between two official teams in a formally established league).

As would be expected, we had no difficulty locating and observing organized team sport events. In fact, nearly 100 undergraduate sociology students observed at least one game each and talked with a minimum of two of the participants involved in each game. (One from each team.) The different organized sports included in the observations were football, boys' soccer, girls' soccer, hockey, boys' baseball and girls' softball.

Unlike organized sport, neither informal games nor spontaneous play necessarily involve any vigorous or complex plysical activity or movement. Because of this, it took some time and ingenuity to track down the occurrance of informal games but eventually most of the student-observers were successful in making at least one observation. The games most frequently observed occurred on elementary school playgrounds during recess periods. Others were observed in popular gathering places in residential areas, especially in small neighborhood parks, vacant lots and large private yards.

Spontaneous play situations, especially those involving physical activity, are difficult to observe. The students quickly learned that by their very nature,

spontaneous activities of any type tend to defy prediction. Some of the more patient students were able to view clearcut cases of spontaneous play on school playgrounds and in pre-school and child-care facilities. Others were able to observe a neighbor's or their own children playing in or around their homes. An additional methodological problem interfering with the completion of observations of spontaneous play was that the presence of an observer, even an unobtrusive one, often tended to stifle the continuation of the activity by the older participants, especially when they were involved in solitary play.

Because of the exploratory nature of our project, observational categories were general and the recording of events was largely determined by the individual observers. Listed below are the categories which guided observations and in which information was recorded:

--amount of time devoted to initiating the activity
--key factors in sustaining action
--formulation and application of rules
--the nature of interpersonal relationships (support, disagreement, hostility, assistance)
--displays of satisfaction or disappointment
--status hierarchy
--incidence of deviance
--locus of decision-making and social control
--tension management (solution of arguments)
--reasons for breakdowns in or completion of action
--total action time

Although observer biases undoubtedly influenced the recording of information (in spite of our prior discussions about awareness and control), it is likely that they served primarily to emphasize the positive aspects of the activities in each of the three settings. The reason for this is that the students tended to devote the largest proportion of their observational time to the activity setting they most preferred.

In all, 252 observations were recorded and included in the analysis (121 organized team sport events, 84 informal games and 47 cases of spontaneous play). Unfortunately, there was no precise record of the characteristics of the young people observed and interviewed. However, feedback from the student-observers permits some general statements to be made. Participants were predominantly white

with no more than 10% being black or chicano.[2] Socioeconomic status was difficult to determine but it was generally concluded that participants came from lower-middle to upper-middle income families. Boys tended to outnumber girls in each of the activity contexts by a ratio of 2-1. The age range of participants in organized sport programs and informal games was 6 - 13 years old with the majority being 10-12 years old. In spontaneous play, the age range was about 3 - 12 years old. Observed cases of spontaneous play among children over 8 years old were rare and they were likely to be discontinued when the observer was noticed, even when the observer was a parent or an older brother or sister of one of the participants.

The verbal data from the participants were collected primarily as a source of clarification for what was recorded during the observations. They were the "insiders explanations" of things such as rules, emotional displays, decision-making procedures, responses to deviance, types of sanctions used, etc. Because questions were related to the specific event these data varied greatly within and between each of the three types of activity contexts. However, there was an attempt to obtain some comparable data by asking two relatively standard questions to each of the participants with whom there was a conversation. The students could alter the wording of the questions to fit the specific setting but the focus was always on (a) what the participant enjoyed most about the activity (i.e., the thing making it the most fun) and (b) what the biggest source of problems was in the activity (i.e., the thing most likely to keep the activity from being fun).

FINDINGS

The initial data analysis was done by hand in an attempt to capture all of the descriptive material recorded by the observers.[3] The goal was to construct separate models for each of the activity contexts and to assess the models in terms of their implications for socialization and development. The analysis clearly demonstrated that the structure and dynamics of the activities and the patterns of participant experiences varied considerably according to the contexts in which they occurred. Table 1 summarizes these variations along 10 major dimensions. Although the information in the table should not be surprising to anyone familiar with the literature on play and games, it does provide a basis for comparing

the experience differences between spontaneous play, informal games, and organized sport programs. A further explanation of these contexts is necessary to discuss the possible developmental implications of each.

SPONTANEOUS PLAY

Observations of 47 cases of spontaneous play along with what verbal data were useful indicated that the action in play is clearly based on the expressive feelings of the participants.[4] For example, a 9 year old girl, when asked what made her play the most fun, responded by saying that "it's what I feel like doing." In spontaneous play, the expressive feelings of those involved are embodied in the frequently heavy use of imagination. But underlying the feelings and the imagination there was often an indication of a search for self-mastery, i.e., an attempt to create a situation or to perform an action up to some personal standard of satisfaction.

Because of its heavy basis in personal interest and in the use of imagination, spontaneous play only rarely involved the interaction of more than 3 or 4 individuals. Sharing an imaginary scene or locating others with identical personal interests was apparently difficult. Sometimes it was possible to "instill" interests in one or two others but the recruiting of more than a couple of play-mates was unlikely. Part of the reason for this was that most of the play situations were not complex enough to demand the involvement of more than 2 - 4 real people.

Furthermore, over 30% (N = 16) of the spontaneous play activities involved a solitary participant. The interaction in the observed play situations was generally not so much a product of role taking (i.e., putting yourself in the positions of each of the others) as it was of a coincidental meshing of two or more individual lines of role playing or role modelling behaviors. However, there were two relatively common exceptions to this. One occurred in cases in which an individual participant was clearly dominant in the relationships involved and tried to effectively control the actions of the others. The second exception occurred when one participant had a strong commitment to maintaining the action while the other(s) wanted to withdraw. In both of these cases, there was a necessity for anticipating the abilities and interests of the other participants

so that the desired scene or action could be created and/or maintained. Related to these two exceptions interview responses to the question on the biggest problem in the activity indicated that the major obstacle to having fun in play was the absence of others wanting to play, i.e., to do the same thing "I" want to do. In many cases, what this meant was that the nonoccurrance or the cessation of the activity itself was the major problem.

Since spontaneous play has a focus on expressive action and is based on personal interest, social control is likely to be internal. The observers noted that as long as interest remained high and role playing abilities met minimum requirements, social control in any overt form was absent. Sanctions were rare and when play action was in progress they were used cautiously to avoid turning off fellow participants to the point they might withdraw. Only when the action was viewed as impossible to initiate or when it was already approaching an end were sanctions administered with an intent to damage the feelings of others. Occasionally, sanctions would be self-imposed and take the form of a token verbal reprimand for something done wrong (e.g.: "am I ever dumb!" "why did you do that?").

Meanings attached to play experiences could not usually be inferred by observers nor were they easily articulated by participants. The activities were ends-in-themselves and what they were was what they were meant to be. Even when self-mastery was being sought, success seemed to be imminent because evaluative standards were defined by each individual participant for himself/herself; if failure was experienced, it was always easy to alter expectations so that it would not be likely the next time.

Status structures in play groups were informal and usually based on a combination of age and creative abilities. The oldest and/or the most clever in maintaining captivating play action was the most likely to initiate decisions although consensus was required before they would be followed. Observers noted that a couple of creative players and an interesting activity could maintain spontaneous play for hours. However, the range of action times for play situations was very wide with some lasting only minutes. The length of action time depended solely on the extent to which continued personal and/or collective involvement could be maintained.

INFORMAL GAMES

The observation of 84 cases of informal games and the associated verbal data indicated the primary focus in such activities was on the initiation and maintenance of a combination of action, personal involvement, a close contest and the reaffirmation of friendships. In the majority of games observed, the number of participants was relatively small, ranging from 2 - 12. However, there were 31 cases of games on school playgrounds during recess periods in which the number of participants exceeded 12, but when the number went beyond 20, new games were started to handle the "extras". The participants generally knew one another quite well and had played the same or similar games on previous occasions. It was probably because of this that the games pere preceded by little "organization time". In most cases, teams were quickly constructed on the basis of a combination of skill differences and friendship patterns. Seldom was there a process of systematically choosing players one-by-one.

The games and game rules were usually based on popular game models but contained many modifications to maximize action and involvement and to preserve stimulating competition (i.e., a chance to win for both teams). However, there were frequent cases in which friendship patterns were given a higher priority in team construction than a desire for stimulating competition. For the most part, the modification of game models and traditional rules served to heighten and sustain an uninterrupted flow of action. For example, free throws were generally eliminated in all forms of basketball games, throw-ins were minimized in soccer games, yardage penalties eliminated in football, pitcher's mound distance altered in all types of softball and baseball games so that hitting was always likely. Similar rule structures were observed in varieties of kickball, team 4-square, 4-square, 2-square, handball, street hockey, ultimate frisbee, tennis, volleyball and other games for which there are no common names. Further documentation for the emphasis on action was the extremely high scores in all but a few of the games.

The personal involvement of each of the players was promoted by sometimes complex sets of rule qualifications and handicap systems. The more highly skilled players were often prevented from dominating the game action by being given re-

strictive handicaps; the less skilled players were given advantages. Furthermore, these latter players seemed to be given implicit permission to use special rules in their own favor. In cases of doubt about what actually happened or should have happened in a game, they were most likely to use "do over" and "interference" calls so that they could either get another chance or lower the implications of their lower skill levels for game outcomes. This seemed to save them some personal embarrassment and allowed their integrity as "contributing team members" to be preserved. Preventing the overuse of special rules was not usually necessary but when it was, it was done informally through jests or verbal barbs.

The emphasis on personal involvement was embodied in rules like "no called strikes" in baseball, the rule allowing everyone to be eligible to receive a pass in football, and other rules allowing the "little kids to have a chance". In fact, the question asking participants what it was that made the game the most fun elicited answers such as "getting chances" to hit, catch, run with the ball, kick it, score, serve it often, etc.

Individual and collective commitment to action and personal involvement provided the basis for social control during the game. Sanctions were informal and were employed to discourage interuptions of the action or the destruction of involvement for individual participants. Joking around and cases of deviance were not absent from informal games but they were only defined as problems to be coped with when they jeopardized the flow of action. Observers noted that any number of different performance styles such as batting left-handed, throwing around-the-back passes, running unplanned pass patterns, moving out of position, etc. were all accepted in the games as long as action was not destroyed. In line with this, players with the highest amounts of skill were allowed the greatest amount of freedom to play "as the spirit moved them". At the same time, such freedom seemed to give the older and high-ability participants a means through which their interest could be sustained.

The verbal data indicated that the meanings attached to game action and events were personal and had direct connection with the nature of the action in the game, the sharing of action with friends, or the personal performance displays occurring at various times during the action. Rewards were primarily intrinsic

but they were occasionally tied into achievement-related self-assessments of involvement and success. Visible extrinsic rewards were limited to immediate feedback from peers.

The status structure among players in the informal games was usually important because it determined the extent to which individuals would participate in decision-making processes during the game. Generally, the older players or those with the best physical skills were accorded the highest status but there were cases observed in which individuals who were adept at handling interpersonal relationships were heavily involved in decision-making processes, especially when arguments occurred.

Suprisingly to most of the observers, arguments were not very frequent. Over 50% (N = 44) of the games observed did not have an argument lasting long enough to slow down the normal flow of action in the game. In the remaining games, arguments occurred but they were solved in all but about 9% (N = 8) of the total cases. Players had apparently played together often enough so that maintaining the game to some logical end point was not a problem. Interestingly, the single major factor interrupting a game before it reached its logical end point was the intervention of an adult who informed one or more of the players that it was time to quit.

ORGANIZED TEAM SPORT EVENTS

The observations of 121 regular season games in organized programs coupled with clarifying verbal data from over 242 participants indicated that the structure and the meaning of the experiences in such games were unique when compared to the other two activity settings. Participants in the organized games remained interested in action and personal involvement but they were more serious and more likely to couch their interests in a concern with individual and team efficiency and the outcomes of games. According to the observers, the most apparent aspect of the games was that both action and involvement were under adult control and the behavior of the players was strictly patterned by specialized rules and roles. This was brought out in the verbal data when the players readily identified themselves by the positions they played and seemed to take pride in

being a defensive this or an offensive that, or a center forward, or left winger or catcher, etc. This was even characteristic among players who did not get in the games for more than a short period of time. The importance of positions was further emphasized by adults, both coaches and spectators, who frequently encouraged players to "stay in position" (especially common in soccer, hockey and occasionally in girls' softball).

The actual play of the game was governed by time schedules, the weather and the setting of the sun. Individual playing time for the participants generally varied according to skill levels. Most often it was the smaller, visibly timid and less skilled children who sat on the sidelines. Although everyone usually got into the game for at least a short period of time, those whose action time was low often maintained only a token interest in the game, and while on the sidelines, seemed to be generally bored with the whole situation or interested in things unrelated to the game. Those whose skill level was high were most likely to exhibit strong game interest and express visible disappointment at being taken out of the action. When they were taken out, they stayed close to the coach and waited or asked to be put back into the game.

An additional consequence of adult control and high degree of organization was the visible absence of arguments and overt displays of hostility between the players. The few cases in which arguments did occur were between members of the same team and the cause was generally a player's inability to stay in position, play it efficiently or carry out a pre-planned pattern of game strategy. Adult control and the degree of organization also seemed to have an effect on the visible display of affection and friendship during the play of the game. The exceptions to this were observed during halftime breaks and the half of the inning during which a team came to bat in baseball and softball. However, the nature of interpersonal relationships seemed to have little relevance for what happened in the game itself.

The major manifest function of game rules seemed to be the standardization of competition and the control of player behavior. The impact of the rules on the extent of action and involvement was most apt to take the form of an interruption but there were few visible indications from the players that they resented

this fact. The only displays of being annoyed occurred when the delay was related to a penalty call against their team. Rule enforcement was always in the hands of adults and the applications of rules were based on universalistic criteria, i.e., there were no exceptions made taking into consideration individual abilities or characteristics.

The compliance of participants was extremely high and deviance resulted most often from a player not knowing or forgetting what to do rather than from a desire to gain an unfair advantage. On the playing field, the observed cases of deviance were generally accompanied by formal sanctions regardless of whether they had an effect on game action or on the success of the team. Off the field, norms varied from team to team. When deviance occurred, it usually took the form of "joking around" or exhibiting a blanket lack of interest in the game of the team. Responses to these behaviors was also varied. Sometimes sanctions were nonverbal and other times they took the form of requests to stop or actual commands to do something else. In all, the game rules and team rules were used to not only control behavior; they were also used to apparently preserve the system of organization in the game and the values underlying the authority of referees and coaches.

The observations and the verbal data indicated that the players were generally serious but that excessive concerns about personal performance standards and game outcomes were not characteristic. Interestingly, such concerns were most likely to be visibly manifested by the highly skilled players and among members of the most successful teams. In other words, the outward emphasis on performance and victory was highest for those who performed best and won most frequently. Among the majority of others, participation was described in terms of intrinsic rewards. Similarly, the disappointment associated with a specific game (or an entire season of team membership) was usually related to personal opportunities to play in games. Of course, a desire to play more is not always just related to intrinsic rewards. Playing for the better part of a game or making a starting team may be a channel for gaining many extrinsic rewards from peers, parents and others. Lastly, players were almost always able to provide an exact statement of their team record and what that meant in the league standings.

The formal status structure on the organized teams seemed to be ultimately dependent on the coach's assessment of relative physical abilities and the potential for contributing to team success. It was also observed that the better players were given more responsibility on the team and often more latitude in determining what they would do during play. In general, it was physical skill and coach acknowledgement that was at the basis of the status and the individual autonomy of the players.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although the data collected in the pilot project do not provide a definite answer to the question of whether a person should encourage their children to play organized sports, they do point out that there are major differences between organized sports and other settings in which physical activity occurs. If the activity occurs in spontaneous play it will tend to be characterized by a high degree of expression and individual freedom and involve the use of imagination and creative skills and efforts focused on extending one's personal range of self-mastery. Informal competitive games, on the other hand, are characterized by strong concern for action and personal involvement and depend heavily on the interpersonal and decision-making abilities and the organizational skills of the participants. Finally, organized team sports events are characterized by adult control and formally organized interaction with involvement, a central concern of most participants, closely related to individual physical skills and the abilities to learn the roles through which skills are displayed.

Unfortunately, the data do not deal directly with developmental factors but they strongly suggest that the developmental implications of involvement in organized sport programs are considerably different than what they might be in play and informal games. Most importantly, the organized sport experience consists of individual and collective responses of children to a relatively serious, adult-controlled formally established system of rules and relationships. In light of the literature on the developmental benefits of play and informal games, this is an important point to consider. The research on play and games has consistently emphasized the significant developmental implications of participant control as

well as the absence of factors which increase the 'reality consequences" (i.e., the psychological risks associated with evaluative feedback from influential others) of the young person's involvement in the activity.

The importance of participant control was recognized by Piaget (1951) when he pointed out that the value of play lies in the opportunities it affords a child to alter reality so that it corresponds with his/her unique conceptions of the world. Similarly, Erikson (1963) emphasized individual experimentation, exploration and the creation of "model situations" as the means through which a child learns to cope with experience and master reality. Recent discussions of play and individual development have merely supported and re-emphasized these points made by Piaget and Erikson (see Stone, 1965; Peller, 1971; Ellis, 1973; Ciuciu, I974; Devereux, 1976; Kleiber, 1976; Polgar, 1976; Suttie and Shearer, 1976; Wade, 1976; and Watson, 1976, 1977). Although research has not been able to pinpoint precisely how the development process occurs through play and games it does suggest that if an activity setting does not allow for the manipulation and control of the environment by those involved, it is unlikely to provide anything beyond a relatively restricted learning experience. According to Brian Sutton-Smith any activity setting not subject to participant control generally involves behavior based on an "objective accommodation" to a given set of conditions rather than a "subjective assimilation" of those conditions for the purpose of using them to meet personal objectives. In other words, spontaneous play and informal games characteristically involve a subjective internalization of the elements of the activity setting while organized sport characteristically involves a response conforming to expectations which are grounded in a system of organization and adult leadership. The former experience would seem to contribute to the development of an ability to create, organize, and change while the latter would seem to contribute to the development of obedience, conformity to authority, and an ability to meet expectations in highly structured settings. These are very similar to conclusions made by Sutton-Smith (1975) and Sage (1978) in their respective discussions of play and organized sport. Sutton-Smith points out that the learning which occurs in play is most useful when the future is characterized by uncertainty and when there is a need for a person to be flexible and maintain "a wide repertoire of potential responses up his sleeve" (1975:214). However, according to Sutton-Smith, the play

experience has little to offer "if the pressures of adaptation require a very clear cut response" (1975:214). Related to this latter point, Sage has recently argued that the organized sport experience "is substantially influential in producing ... the bureaucratic personality" (1978:12).

In the project, the absence of arguments and even the potential for arguments in organized sport would seem to be strongly related to these inferred developmental consequences of participant control. Because play and informal games generate issues and conflict situations that threaten their existence, participants gain experiences in not only anticipating and preventing arguments but they also have the opportunity to deal with differences and disagreements in a setting in which they themselves must directly face the consequences of their solutions. They learn that their solutions are necessary for the continuation of the activity and that they cannot base those solutions on coercion without creating severe negative side effects jeopardizing the long and short-term future of the activity. In organized sport programs, arguments about judgments or the appropriateness of rules and procedures do not occur between players because of the universalistic applications and interpretations of norms by referees and coaches. Therefore, the experience in play and informal games emphasizes interpersonal skills (negotiations and compromise) while the experience in organized sport emphasizes a knowledge and dependence on strict rules and the acceptance of the decisions of others in positions of legitimate authority. This seems to be very consistent with the conclusions made by Sutton-Smith (1975) and Sage (1978).

In addition to participant control another important element of play and informal games is that they afford children opportunities to create, experiment with, and alter their involvement in physical activities without the threat of high reality consequences. For example, Kleiber points out that a "game situation with its separateness from reality and limiting boundaries allows for self-expression and experimentation in a safe context with peers who are making judgments only in that context " (1976:69). Of course, neither organized sport programs nor adult supervision inevitably increase the reality consequences of involvement to a point where they stifle creativity, self-expression and experimentation but, according to observations in our project, they have a tendency to do so. With a general participant awareness of factors such as team records, the relative amounts

of playing times in games, and both formal and informal evaluative feedback from adults who favorably respond to technique and performance, a participant is quite likely to limit his/her range of expression and experimentation to maximize immediate and visible success experiences.[5] Thus, organized programs would seem to emphasize development of cautious, achievement-oriented, "professional" attitudes among participants (see also Webb, 1969; Mantel and Vander Velden, 1971; Petrie, 1971; and Maloney and Petrie, 1972).

The way many of the participants in the organized programs responded to questions about team practices, one of the components of this "professional attitude" may be a strong tendency to distinguish between the process of achieving a goal and actual achievement. Practices were often viewed as the means to preparing oneself and the team for meeting expectations in games. It would seem that as the reality consequences of participation increased there would be associated increases in the development of priorities in which a product orientation would exist at the expense of a process orientation. In other words, the formal games are fun, the practices are generally not; the achievement rests in the actual meeting of a challenge rather than in preparing for it. In the cases of play and informal competitive games, the goal orientation of the participants was unlikely to lead to a distinction between process and product; achievement rested primarily in maintaining the process of involvement. Evaluative standards were relative to that process rather than being based on external sources. This seemed to give the participant a wide range of opportunities to express themselves and to experiment with personal styles and techniques; reality consequences were low.

The developmental implications of differences in the level of reality consequences are vague at best. The higher reality consequences in organized sport may ultimately emphasize the development of a strong product orientation coupled with a dependence on external sources of evaluative feedback for advice and evaluation, and the tendency to value caution and specialization as the most appropriate methods of achieving success. The lower reality consequences of informal games and especially spontaneous play may ultimately emphasize the development of a strong process orientation coupled with a reliance on self-evaluation and the tendency to value and utilize diversified and general abilities in coping with reality.

Before concluding it should be pointed out that this discussion on developmental implications must be carefully interpreted. For example, levels of adult control and reality consequences may vary in organized programs. Furthermore, individual experiences in such programs are likely to vary greatly; general patterns do exist but individual consequences depend on a variety of factors, including program structure, parental and peer influence and length of involvement. General patterns exist in spontaneous play and informal games but there will be experience differences from situation to situation depending on the nature of interpersonal relationships, the prior experiences of participants, and the organizational characteristics of the activities themselves (such as the number of participants, complexity of rules, the diversity of roles, etc.).

Fortunately, the experiences of many young people are not usually limited to only one of these activity settings. If the experiences in each do, in fact, lead to different development consequences, then it may be that the most beneficial involvement pattern would consist of participation in all of the settings. This possibility raises important questions regarding the relationships between play, games, and sport. It may be that they are different enough activities that their developmental consequences will not always be complimentary and that extended participation in one will eventually preclude involvement in one or both of the other settings.[6] This latter prospect has led Devereux (1976) to discuss the growth of organized sport and the associated "impoverishment" of play and informal games among young people. Janet Lever (1978) has recently made the case that for young girls to confine themselves to simple, undifferentiated play and non-competitive games may make it difficult later to become successfully involved in more highly structured, complex activities.

In general, it seems that if play and informal games have something positive to offer, increased efforts should be made to encourage and precipitate them whenever possible (without destroying participant control or increasing reality consequences). If organized sports provide developmental benefits, administrators and coaches should become more sensitive to why many children refrain from or discontinue participation. Programs should be altered so that wider participation is encouraged. It seems that the trend over the last 30 years has been to emphasize organized programs and heavily supervised game playing and to generally ignore

the promotion of play and informal games. It may be that the media and our tendency to organize has begun to not only destroy an ability to create and sustain on-the-spot activities but also the desire to do so because such activities lack the formal requirements that have come to be defined as necessary for a sport event to occur. Therefore, if a uniform is not worn, if official equipment and facilities are unavailable and if the activity itself does not meet formal specifications, it is not worth doing - - even if there were some young people around with the abilities to get the activity started.

TABLE 1. DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE IN SPONTANEOUS PLAY, INFORMAL COMPETITIVE GAMES, AND ORGANIZED TEAM SPORT EVENTS.

DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE	SPONTANEOUS PLAY	INFORMAL GAMES	ORGANIZED TEAM SPORT EVENT
I. BASIS OF ACTION	a search for mastery, a use of imagination and a coincincidental meshing of personal interests and/or role playing activities	prior experiences and existing social relationships coupled with the interpersonal and decision-making abilities of group members	predesigned system of roles, adult leadership, and the collective role learning abilities of team members
II. NORMS GOVERNING ACTION	emergent and created to meet personal standards, interests, and/or to simulate imagined role relationships	carried over from past experience with changes and qualifications based on individual needs and maintenance of uncertainty	highly formalized and specific, serving both organizational needs and formal team goals
III. SOCIAL CONTROL	internally generated and dependent on individual role playing and role taking interests and abilities	generally internal and dependent on the collective vested interests in the game at hand	partially internal but heavily maintained by formal standards enforced by external agents and dependent on the compliance of players
IV. SANCTIONS	self-imposed on a token basis or informally administered when a scene is disrupted	informal and primarily used to minimize threats to the maintenance of action, personal involvement and uncertainty	both informal and formal and used for the preservation of values as well as order
V. GROUP INTEGRATION	generally coincidental and dependent on a continual commitment to and overlap of the roles played by each of the individuals involved	generally based on the strength of personal relationships combined with a process of social exchange between group members	based on a combination of collective satisfaction and an awareness of and compliance with a formal set of norms and role expectations
VI. MEANINGS ATTACHED TO ACTIONS AND EVENTS	emergent, nebulus, and vary with each individual's conception of what is or should be going on	personal, situational and related to the intensity of action and the social implications of the experience	often serious, assuming relevance beyond the game itself and frequently related to instrumental concerns
VII. REWARDS	intrinsic and vary with each individual's personal experience	primarily intrinsic and dependent on each individual's assessment of personal involvement and success	both intrinsic and extrinsic; related to the experience itself, the quality of performance and/or game outcomes
VIII. STATUS STRUCTURE IS BASED ON	combination of age, individual creative abilities and arbitrary situational distinctions	age combined with interpersonal and physical abilities	physical abilities, contributions to team success and conformity to the coach's expectations
IX. INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM	limited only by self-imposed restrictions with involvement voluntary at all times	variable with restrictions related to individual physical skills and prior status within the group	variable but restricted to the range of behavior accepted within the rules and expectations of the coach
X. STRUCTURAL STABILITY	variable and depends on the time span over which collective involvement can be maintained	relatively high and grounded in prior group experiences and the anticipation of future games	very high and grounded in the endorsement of adults and the formal goals of the team

FOOTNOTES

[1]This project was initially designed as a learning experience for the students in three different sections of an undergraduate sociology course entitled Leisure, Sport and Society.

[2]Only in 5 cases in informal games was there an indication that race or ethnicity was a factor in the composition of teams. In each of those cases, it seemed as if race and/or ethnicity served as a basis for social ties which then became the basis for team selection procedures.

[3]Analysis was completed in three stages with three different groups of student-observers so that they could provide feedback in the interpretation of their own observations and recorded data.

[4]The observed cases of spontaneous play involved a variety of physical actions including throwing, rolling, kicking or hitting some kind of object; riding bikes or skateboards; playing on park equipment; dancing; skiing; tubing (on snow); diving or swimming; ice skating; doing gymnastics; among others.

[5]Most of the observers reported that beyond the actual control exercised by adults, the mere presence of adults seemed to change the atmosphere surrounding the activity. This has also been noted by Brower, 1978; Underwood, 1978; and Yablonsky and Brower, 1978.

[6]The relationship between organized programs and informal games may be quite complex. Our observations indicated that activities and game models were often influenced by events receiving media coverage and the types of organized sports in which youth involvement is relatively high. It may be that the media and organized programs provide the knowledge of game models and initial incentives to try the games informally but there may also be a severe limiting of activity and game diversity in this process.

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